

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

The meeting will be held at **6.30 pm** on **7 June 2023**

Committee Room 2, Civic Offices 3, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

Membership:

Committee A:

Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member
Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Sikh Member
Mr T Ojetola, Pentecostal Member
Mr L Trup, Jewish Member
X6 Vacancies

Committee B:

Mr P Anderson, Church of England Member
Mrs L Fry, Church of England Member
Ms L Olajide, Church of England Member
Mrs R Everett, Church of England Member

Committee C:

Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations
Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations
Mrs C Pumfrey, Teachers' Associations
Ms R Shina, Teachers' Associations
X2 Vacancies

Committee D:

Councillor Qaisar Abbas, Local Authority
Councillors Daniel Chukwu, Local Authority
Councillors James Thandi, Local Authority

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 10

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education meeting held on 18 January 2023.

3 Items of Urgent Business

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Declarations of Interest

5 Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chairs

6 Collective Worship (To Follow) 11 - 36

7 Update on National Developments and Opportunities (To Follow) 37 - 50

8 Spirited Arts (Verbal update)

9 Paganism and RE in Thurrock (To Follow)

10 Recruitment, Training and Retention of Teachers of RE (To Follow) 51 - 64

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **30 May 2023**

Information for members of the public and councillors

Access to Information and Meetings

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non-pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 18 January 2023 at 6.30 pm

- Committee A:** Miss Saul, Ms H Kaur Takhtar and Mr L Trup
- Committee B:** Mr P Anderson and Mrs R Everett
- Committee C:** Ms J Culloty and Ms R Shina
- Committee D:** Councillors Q Abbas and J Thandi (left at 7.00pm)
- Apologies:** Ms C Pumfrey, Mr A Kariyawasam, Ms A Thompson, Mrs L Lyn, Mr T Ojetola and Councillor D Chukwu
- In attendance:** Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022 and 2 November 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

18. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

19. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

20. Collective Worship

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report at pages 15 to 38 of the agenda.

Mr Trup thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for the report and commented he felt that page 30 within the agenda was incredibly helpful and sought if it was possible to send it to schools for relevant subject leads for information.

Miss Saul stated the document was very thorough and would be very useful to schools.

The Chair of SACRE thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for the report. He continued by saying he thought schools would welcome the guidance, which was very clear and explained how schools offered Religious Education within the Law.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Notes the sample of collective worship policies from Thurrock schools.**
- 2. Requests that the Associate Advisor for religious Education sends out a copy of the updated guidance on Collective Worship to schools in Thurrock**

21. Monitoring Provision for RE in Thurrock Schools

The report at pages 39 to 48 of the agenda was introduced by the Associate Advisor for Religious Education.

Members were then entered into 5 small groups to each discuss the SACRE survey of provision for Religious Education in Thurrock November 2022 at Appendix 1 of the report, the following observations were made:

- Question 1 - Teachers and subject leads may not know about up to date CPD.
- Questions 1/4 - How can we advertise CPD for teachers/schools? Perhaps poster/post?
- Questions 1/4 - Local school RE leads need to meet - use the old Thurrock Secondary School meetings once a term.
- Question 5 (Primary) - It was good to see Reception and EYFS accessing the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus to deliver RE
- Question 5 (Primary) - It was nice to see that the majority of schools are dedicating a minimum of an hour to RE which shows that it is a valued subject.
- Question 5 (Primary) - I can see consistency in the approach towards the delivery of RE in our Trust schools
- Question 5 (Secondary) – Do the very low curriculum times (1-30 mins) provide enough time to deliver the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus?
- Question 5 (Secondary) - Some schools are not providing the statutory minimum (EITHER a core entitlement OR an exam course) at KS4
- Question 5 (Secondary) - 5 out of 12 responses indicate that the statutory minimum is not being met.
- Questions 6-9 - The majority of responders are using Agreed Syllabus either partly or fully which demonstrates its worth and ensures children get a varied and lawful curriculum.
- Questions 6-9 - There appears to be a reliance on PPA and supply teachers teaching RE. Quality and importance may be an issue?

- Question 10 - 73% said Yes or mostly to resource allocation.
- Question 10 - Mostly teachers say they have enough resources, though this may show that people have low expectations.
- Question 11 - 2/3s have or will have visited a place of worship. Great!
- Question 11 - I wonder if people have got out of the habit of visiting due to covid.
- Question 12 - 36% of subject leaders have 5+ years and 25% of subject leaders are brand new.
- Question 12 – In light of this observed distribution, how do we ensure experienced subject leads support newer colleagues?

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1 Notes the survey report in Appendix 1,**
- 2 Requests the LA officer to include the following information in conversations with schools where relevant:**
 - **Where good practice is identified.**
 - **Where there is no evidence that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met.**
 - **Where there are reports of limited or no provision.**

22. Census 2021 and its implications for SACRE

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report detailed at pages 49 to 62 of the agenda.

During discussions it was highlighted that SACRE had vacancies which required filling, these were for Committee A – Faith Groups Muslim Representative, Hindu Representative, Buddhist Representative and Free Church Representative.

Members discussed the possibility of having smaller religious groups represented on SACRE in light of the census results for Thurrock. It was noted that there were very few self-identifying Humanists in Thurrock, but the number of self-identifying Pagans (broadly defined) significant exceeds the national average. It was noted that SACRE had previously resolved to adopt the following guidelines when considering adding representatives of smaller religions and beliefs to Committee A:

In order to nominate a representative to Thurrock SACRE, a religion or belief should have:

- a) A minimum of 500 self-identified adherents (0.3%) in the Thurrock area;*
- b) A recognisable local group meeting regularly within the Thurrock area;*
- c) A representative organisation capable of providing nominations which is willing to confirm its acceptance of and support for the aims and objectives of Thurrock SACRE.*

It was agreed by Members to request that the Associate Advisor for Religious Education reach out to the Pagan Federation to ask whether there is a Pagan faith community meeting in Thurrock which SACRE would be able to contact to explore opportunities for further engagement.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1 Notes the data from the census as it applies to Thurrock.**
- 2 Will contact local Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Free Church groups to seek new SACRE representatives.**
- 3 Requests that the Associate Advisor for Religious Education reach out to the Pagan Federation to ask whether there is a Pagan faith community meeting in Thurrock which SACRE would be able to contact to explore opportunities for further engagement**

23. Annual Report 2021-2022 Thurrock SACRE

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education introduced the report found at pages 63 to 84 of the agenda. It that in order for SACRE to fulfil its statutory duty, they were to publish an Annual Report and to advise the Local Authority on RE given in accordance with the agreed syllabus.

The Chair of SACRE commented that in previous years the report had been presented to elected Members at Full Council and sought if any of the Councillors present would be happy to do so this year. Councillor Abbas confirmed he was happy to liaise with Democratic Services to have the Annual Report presented at the next available Full Council Meeting.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1 Accepts this report as an accurate record of its work for the period September 2021 – July 2022**
- 2 Requests that the Assistant Director Education and Skills continues to include discussions about RE provision in the scheduled discussions with senior leadership teams**
- 3 Requests that the school effectiveness team include a review of schools' provision for RE and Collective Worship as part of their annual conversations. Specifically, that they consider:**
 - o whether the level and quality of provision in academy schools is similar in breadth and ambition to that provided in LA maintained schools (i.e. through compliance with the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus including the knowledge, understanding specified and the standards for each key stage). This is the expectation of the DfE and Ofsted.**

- If timetabling of RE in secondary schools ensures that those delivering RE are suitably trained/qualified to do so.
- Whether RE is treated differently from other subjects on the secondary curriculum, such as being offered in tutor time, drop down days, taught by teachers who mainly teach other subjects etc.
- the impact on pupil outcomes of the combination of subjects such as RE, RSE, Citizenship and PSHE.
- the level of training provided to those teaching RE in all phases especially when they have no previous experience of teaching the subject.
- the impact on pupil attainment of pupils being entered for a GCSE at the end of year 10.

24. Any Other Business

Members agreed that the June/July 2023 meeting will be held as a hybrid meeting (in person and online).

The meeting finished at 8.06 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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7 June 2023	ITEM: 6
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Collective Worship	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills	
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

This report is very similar to the one produced for SACRE in Spring 2023 but now includes the following amendments to the proposed guidance:

1. *Updated section on inspection makes clear that collective worship is not routinely included in Ofsted inspections but inspectors may visit assemblies or collective worship.*
2. *A list of resources sourced from RE Today is included with permission*
3. *Rev. John Guest’s Assembly books have been included*
4. *Clarified that although Circular 1/94 is old, it is the most up to date DfE guidance for Collective Worship and is referenced the 2010 guidance for RE in English Schools*

One of the duties of SACRE is to monitor the provision of Acts of Collective Worship in schools in the local authority. In the past, the information that enabled a SACRE to fulfil this duty might have been provided by a specialist local adviser who worked full time in an area. Cuts in the budgets of local authorities mean that only a small number employ such an adviser. Thurrock SACRE is fortunate that the Council do fund a specialist adviser for a fixed number of days to support their work. Likewise, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) used to report on Acts of Worship but shorter inspections and a change in their focus means that inspectors do not systematically report on Acts of Collective Worship.

Thurrock SACRE reviewed the policies of a number of schools in the summer term meeting 2019 and summer term 2020 and reported to schools on their findings. This report proposes that SACRE review a third sample of policies on Acts of Collective Worship that appear of school websites to determine if anything has changed in the last year and to identify good practice. As with the 2019 and 2020 exercises, the aim of the exercise will be monitoring of provision and also for SACRE to become more informed about practice in local schools.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

Resolve that the updated advice (Appendix 1) be sent to schools acknowledging revisions made (see Executive summary) following discussion at the Spring Term meeting (Appendix 1)

2. Introduction and Background

Acts of collective worship – traditionally called ‘assemblies’ by teachers and pupils alike – have long been a feature of British school life. The 1944 Education Act simply stated that each school day should begin with an act of collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school. The daily requirement was restated in the 1988 Education Act which also set out a series of new legislative requirements concerning the organisation and character of collective worship.

The government introduced guidance for schools in relation to the law of Religious Education and Collective Worship in the form of Circular 1/94. The Religious Education element of this document was updated by the publication of ‘Religious Education in English Schools’ in 2010 but no update was provided in relation to Acts of Collective Worship leaving schools with guidance that is more than 20 years old.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 What does the legislation require?

The legal requirements can be summarised as follows:

- 3.1.1. All registered pupils in state-funded schools should take part in a daily act of collective worship unless wholly or partly withdrawn by parents. The term ‘registered pupils’ includes students up to and including the age of eighteen years in a school sixth form or at a sixth form college but not pupils in nursery schools or classes. Students over the age of 18 are entitled to withdraw themselves from the Act of worship. Collective worship for special school pupils should be provided so far as practicable.
- 3.1.2 There can be a single whole school act of collective worship or separate acts for pupils in different age of school activity groupings.
- 3.1.3. Acts of collective worship can take place at any time of the school day and, with certain exceptions, should take place on the school premises.
- 3.1.4 In a community, academy or foundation schools (ie other than at voluntary-aided schools), most acts of collective worship each term should be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’, that is, ‘reflecting’ the ‘broad traditions of Christian belief’ without being denominationally biased. But acts

of collective worship should also be appropriate, having regard to pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.

- 3.1.5 If a community, academy or foundation school believes that the Christian character clause (4 above) is inappropriate for the whole school or certain pupils within it, application can be made for a determination to have that clause lifted or modified. In the case of Academy schools, that application should be made to the Educational Funding Agency. In the case of community or foundation school, to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Unless the school requests otherwise, a determination will be reviewed by the local SACRE after five years. A determination does not lift the requirement for daily collective worship. Such worship must not be denominational but may be distinctive of a particular faith.
- 3.1.6 Teachers – including head teachers – have the right to withdraw from collective worship (though, in voluntary schools, these conditions may vary) and cannot be discriminated against for so doing. Attending 'assemblies', on the other hand, is part of a teacher's contractual duty.
- 3.1.7 In a community or foundation school, it is the responsibility of a head teacher, in consultation with the governors, to see that these arrangements are carried out. In a voluntary-aided school, it is the responsibility of the governors, in consultation with the head teacher.
- 3.2.1 The legislation on Collective Worship requires schools to offer a daily act of collective worship that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. At first reading, this language may appear to disadvantage children who come from families that do not practice a religious faith or who come from a faith other than Christianity.
- 3.2.2 The legislation does however, permit schools to apply to SACRE for a determination to vary the character of Acts of Worship if they see fit. Alternatively, they may use flexibility present in the language i.e. wholly or mainly may be interpreted to mean 50% or more. Similarly, 'broadly Christian' is different from 'distinctively Christian' and a worship theme such as the importance of forgiveness, that is broadly Christian might also be broadly Jewish, Muslim, Sikh etc.
- 3.2.3 Acts of worship provide an opportunity to celebrate the diversity present in their school community, locally and nationally. The way that policies are developed are therefore a useful indicator of how they engage with these issues.
- 3.2.4. Acts of worship may help schools promote the British Value of tolerance and respect for those with different religions and beliefs.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The review of school websites in relation to Collective Worship suggests that some updated guidance would be helpful to schools.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;
- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
 - Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
 - Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the third element of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the edits of the guidance was conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principle Solicitor on behalf of Thurrock Council

The matters raised in this report and the recommendations made are within the remit and jurisdiction of the Council to approve. Section 391(1) of the Education Act 1996 expressly makes provision for SACREs to advise the local authority on such matters connected with amongst other things, the religious education to be given at a particular school, as SACRE may see fit. Therefore, these recommendations are within the remit of the local authority to approve.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement & Project Monitoring Officer

As mentioned in section 3.2.3 above, the Acts of Worship, like religious education can be a means by which schools celebrate the diversity in their school and local community. This in turn may help pupils to develop respect and tolerance for those with beliefs that are different to their own.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Acts of Collective Worship, A guide for schools in Thurrock

Report Author:

Deborah Weston OBE
Associate Adviser for RE

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Acts of Collective Worship

A guide for schools in Thurrock



For further information, contact:

Deborah Weston – Associate Adviser for Religious Education

deborah@retoday.org.uk

Adapted with permission from The London Borough of Redbridge January 2023

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Introduction

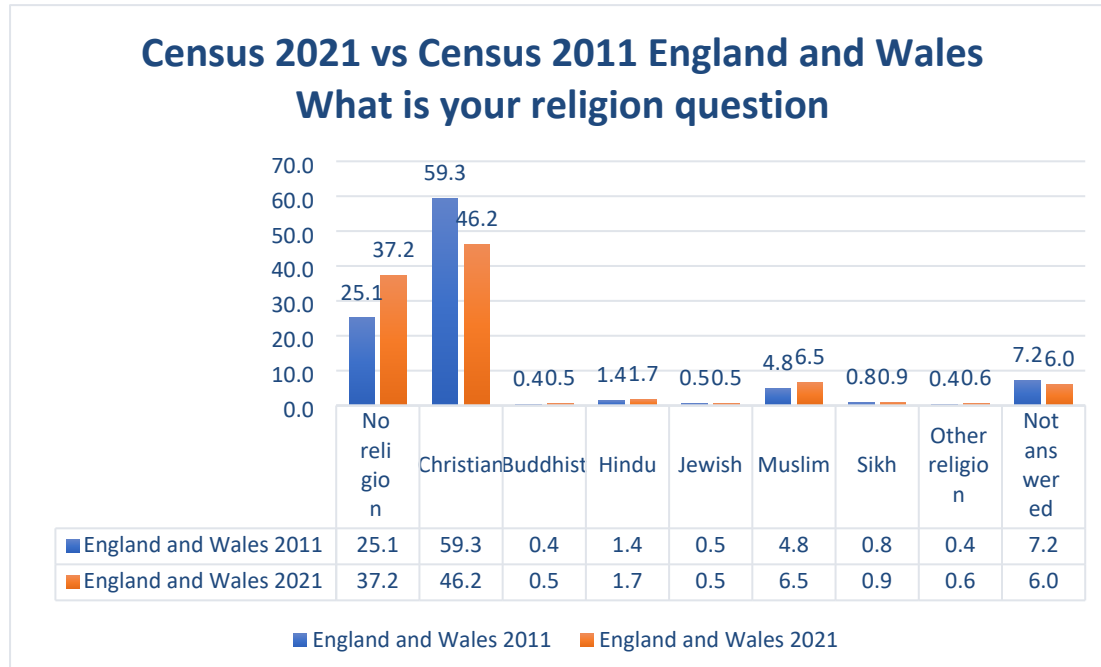
Acts of collective worship – traditionally called ‘assemblies’ by teachers and pupils alike – have long been a feature of British school life.

The 1944 Education Act simply stated that each school day should begin with an act of collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school. The daily requirement was restated in the 1988 Education Act which also set out a series of new legislative requirements concerning the organisation and character of collective worship.

The government introduced guidance for schools in relation to the law of Religious Education and Collective Worship in the form of Circular 1/94. The Religious Education element of this document was updated by the publication of ‘Religious Education in English Schools’ in 2010 but no update was provided in relation to Acts of Collective Worship leaving schools with guidance that is more than 20 years old.

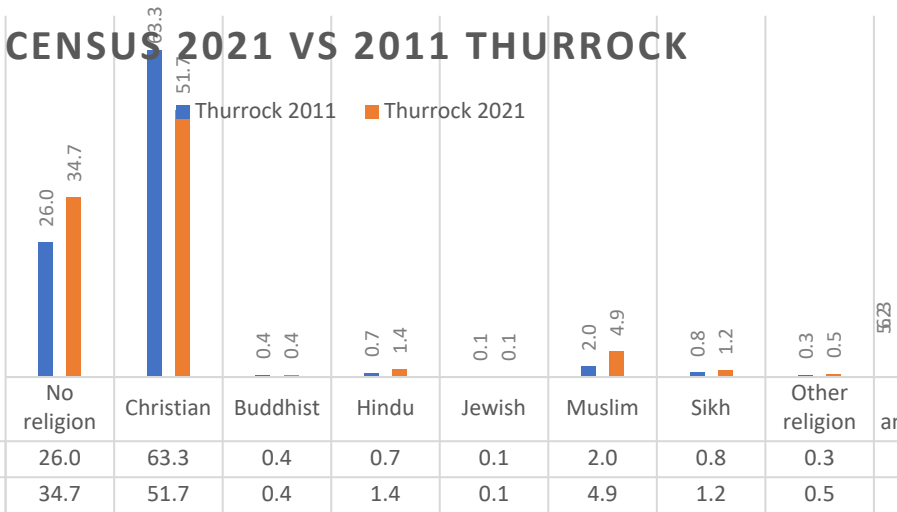
This updated guidance for Thurrock Schools is therefore being issued in response to school requests for clarification about fulfilling their statutory responsibilities in a way that takes account of the modern context of Thurrock Schools.

Thurrock context



CENSUS 2021 VS 2011 THURROCK

% OF POPULATION



■ Thurrock 2011	26.0	63.3	0.4	0.7	0.1	2.0	0.8	0.3	
■ Thurrock 2021	34.7	51.7	0.4	1.4	0.1	4.9	1.2	0.5	

RESPONSE

What does the legislation require?

The legal requirements can be summarised as follows:

All registered pupils in state-funded schools should take part in a daily act of collective worship unless wholly or partly withdrawn by parents. The term 'registered pupils' includes students up to and including the age of eighteen years in a school sixth form or at a sixth form college but not pupils in nursery schools or classes. Students over the age of 18 are entitled to withdraw themselves from the Act of worship. Collective worship for special school pupils should be provided so far as practicable.

There can be a single whole school act of collective worship or separate acts for pupils in different age of school activity groupings.

Acts of collective worship can take place at any time of the school day and, with certain exceptions, should take place on the school premises.

In a community, academy or foundation schools (ie other than at voluntary-aided schools), most acts of collective worship each term should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', that is, 'reflecting' the 'broad traditions of Christian belief' without being denominationally biased. But acts of collective worship should also be appropriate, having regard to pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.

If a community, academy or foundation school believes that the Christian character clause (4 above) is inappropriate for the whole school or certain pupils within it, application can be made for a determination to have that clause lifted or modified. In the case of Academy schools, that application should be made to the Educational Funding Agency. In the case of community or foundation school, to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Unless the school requests otherwise, a determination will be reviewed by the local SACRE after five years.

A determination does not lift the requirement for daily collective worship. Such worship must still be non-denominational but may be distinctive of a particular faith.

Teachers – including head teachers – have the right to withdraw from collective worship (though, in voluntary schools, these conditions may vary) and cannot be discriminated against for so doing. Attending 'assemblies', on the other hand, is part of a teacher's contractual duty.

In a community or foundation school, it is the responsibility of a head teacher, in consultation with the governors, to see that these arrangements are carried out. In a voluntary-aided school, it is the responsibility of the governors, in consultation with the head teacher.

What is the meaning of the terminology?

Worship: SACRE members found the following definition of worship helping in their exploration of Acts of Collective worship in a school context: “Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is the recognition, affirmation and celebration of the ‘worthship’ of certain realities and values, held to be of central importance to the community which worships. The act of worshipping renews the meaning of these realities and values for the community, helping each of its members to grasp them personally”¹

Reflection on celebration of those values that the school considers important can therefore provide a good starting point for the planning of collective worship.

The imprecise use of terms can sometimes both reveal and perpetuate imprecise understanding. It is important, then, to draw to a distinction between:

**collective worship
religious education (RE)**

Collective worship and RE are separate parts of school provision for which different legislative requirements apply. Time used for RE counts towards a school’s total curriculum time whilst this is not the case for collective worship.

This is not to deny, of course, that there can be a fruitful interplay between RE and collective worship – as the 2014 Thurrock Agreed Syllabus makes clear

But OFSTED reports have sometimes pointed out that, when the distinction between collective worship and RE is blurred, the quality of both aspects of school provision can be lowered. To guard against this, it is advisable for schools to have a policy on collective worship separate to that on RE. In the same way, an increasing number of schools make a clear distinction between the roles of ‘RE subject leader’ and ‘assembly leader’;

Collective worship and assembly

Though the latter term has traditionally been used in schools, drawing a formal distinction between the two terms is important because there is no legislative requirement for schools to hold assemblies

the right of withdrawal applies to collective worship but not assembly

the term ‘act of collective worship’ carries implications for practice which the term ‘assembly’ does not;

Corporate worship and collective worship

1. ¹ Paths to Understanding, Hampshire Education Authority, 1980.

There is an irreconcilable tension or paradox within the notion of ‘school worship’. This might best be expressed as a question: how can a community which is not by nature religious (ie a school) meaningfully provide an activity called ‘worship’?

It is now generally acknowledged (1) that the kind of ‘worship’ which a school is required to provide is not the same kind of activity as that found within a faith group. In order to stress this, the distinction is often made between

‘corporate worship’ (ie that kind of worship found within a religious community – a ‘corpus’ or body of believers – whose members meet voluntarily and for reasons of shared commitment)

and

‘collective worship’ (ie that kind of worship which legislation requires schools to provide, which should be consistent with educational aims, and which involves a ‘collectivity’ of people with a range of religious commitments and none).

Legislation requires schools to provide collective, not corporate worship.

A period of reflection

The requirement that schools offer a daily act of collective worship can be a valuable opportunity to provide the school community with a period of time for reflection or prayer at the start of or during the busy school day. The school community in a Thurrock school will almost certainly be made up of children from families with different faiths and from those with non-religious worldviews. The style of the period of reflection must therefore be inclusive of all of these groups by inviting a response but not requiring one.

An invitation to think or pray

A period of reflection can be as simple as asking children to bow their heads and think or pray for a while and following this invitation with a brief period of silence. The advantage of this method is that it gives students the chance to consider the ideas that have been explored in an assembly rather than immediately returning to class where a new learning activity begins. The invitation to think or pray may be a little more specific and include a suggestion for a focus. For example, after an assembly in a secondary school about the work of a charity working to ensure that children in different parts of the world receive an education, the invitation might be to think or pray for a while about their own educational opportunities. In a primary school, the reading of a story such as the parable of the Good Samaritan or the story about Prophet Muhammad and the woman who was planning to leave town might be followed by an invitation to think or pray for while about how they might show kindness to someone today.

As some children may be some time to become used to the sound of silence, a period of reflection may be accompanied by some gentle music. Some teachers have found that providing a focus such as an artefact, a work of art or a large candle is helpful in creating an atmosphere that is conducive to reflection.

Adults present in the room where the assembly is taking place should consider taking part in the period of reflection themselves since as with many desired behaviours, adult role models are vital.

More extended periods of reflection

With practice, teachers can learn to lead a form of breathing space meditation for classes of students. Typically, the session begins with a discussion about posture to allow the children to learn how to sit comfortably with minimal fidgeting during the period of meditation or reflection. An exercise known as a body-scan is sometimes used. You can find out more about training in this technique here <http://www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk/mindfulness-for-schools/breathing-space-in-schools/>

Labyrinths

Another form of reflection can be to offer children the opportunity to experience a Labyrinth. Traditionally, a labyrinth involves children moving between a series of stations, learning a little about a story, an event or a ritual and then contemplating on a feature linked to that story in relation to their own lives. Each station also involves a task or a creative activity. In 2011 Thurrock SACRE won a bursary to explore this technique with local clergy and lay people in a joint training event at St Mary's Church Woodford Bridge. Following the training, a number of local churches opened their Churches in the period leading up to the Christian Festival of Easter to provide children with the opportunity to experience an Easter Labyrinth. More information about this project including instructions for setting up some reflective stations of your own can be found here: <http://www.Thurrockrenet.co.uk/teaching.html> Since that time, a Hajj labyrinth has also been developed and trialled in several schools. All the resources to support this activity have been published by RE Today here: <http://shop.retoday.org.uk/9781905893881>

Prayer Space in schools

Schools and their teachers can learn more about developing techniques for reflection by working with the organisation, Prayer Space in Schools. This organisation works children of all faiths and none to explore some of the fundamental questions of life in a reflective and creative way. A prayer space is usually set up in a classroom for a few days or even a week. Issues explored include subjects such as forgiveness, injustice, thankfulness, big questions, identity and stillness. Learn more about this resource here <http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>

Themes for acts of worship

A series of themes might be a useful tool to help plan acts of worship.

Anger	God	Peace
Care for the environment	Good deeds	Prayer
Careful speech	Good thoughts	Religion and belief
Caring for others	Happiness	Self-control
Character	Humility	Self-confidence
Community	Journeys	Success
Compassion	Justice	Taking Action
Contentment	Keeping good company	Teaching
Correcting wrongs	Kindness	the mystery of life
Courage	Leadership	the value of change
Effort	Learning	the value of every individual
Equality	Love	Truth
Finding a purpose	Making good choices	Unity
Forgiveness	Modesty	Wealth
Freedom	Parenting	Wisdom
Friendship	Noticing beauty	Work
Generosity	Patience	

Styles of acts of worship

Terence Copley, in his publication, "Worship, Worries and Winners" suggests the following different types of stimulus for assemblies

<p>The Active Assembly The "Thing of Beauty" Assembly The Anecdotal Assembly The Singing Assembly The Straight theme Assembly</p>	<p>The Television or Newspaper Theme The Stunt Assembly The Testimony Assembly The Dramatic Monologue The Charity Assembly</p>
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Copley, T., (1989) *Worship Worries and Winners*. London: The National Society and Church House Publishing

Some suggested types of stimulus for acts of worship

Quotations		Interviews		Pupil performance	
	Newspaper reports		A story		Religious text
Everyday objects		Religious artefacts		jokes	

	Audio recordings		Video clip		Prayer
Silence/ reflection		Visiting speaker		Personal memorabilia	
	Classical/ modern music		Pupil creative writing		Dramatic monologue
Painting/ picture		Historical artefact		Literature/ poetry	

Thoughts for the day

When planning a programme of daily acts of collective worship, schools may decide that a short stimulus might suit a teacher or student led act of worship in the style of 'thought for the day'. In this model, a quotation is introduced, discussed with the class and then an opportunity is provided for students to worship should they wish. This opportunity might be introduced with the words:

"Please bow your heads and think or pray for a while about what you have just heard." The following are a set of examples of how a series of 'Thoughts for the day' might be planned for a weekly theme over a complete week;

Will someone else's life be brighter tomorrow because of what you have done today?	W. A. Ward	Author	Good deeds
We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love.	Mother Teresa of Calcutta	Christian	Good Deeds
Cruelty, material attachment, greed and anger are the four rivers of fire. Nanak says, one is burned by falling into them. One is saved only by holding tight to good deeds	Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 147	Sikhism	Good Deeds
Keep yourselves far from envy; it eats up and takes away good actions, just as fire eats up and burns wood	Prophet Muhammad	Islam	Good Deeds
Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions	His Holiness the Dalai Lama	Buddhist	Good deeds
True happiness consists in making others happy	Hindu proverb	Hinduism	Happiness
Greet every person with a pleasant face...Receive every person in a cheerful manner	Ethics of the Fathers 1:15; 3:16	Judaism	Happiness
Many people think excitement is happiness.... But when you are excited you are not peaceful. True happiness is based on peace.	Thich Nhat Hanh	Buddhist	Happiness
Don't trust someone who tells you all of his troubles and keeps you from all of his joys.	Jewish Proverb	Jewish	Happiness
Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared	Buddha		Happiness
"You can't win unless you know how to lose."	Kareem Abdul-Jabbar	Muslim	Humility
Never look down on anybody unless you're helping him up.	Jesse Jackson		Humility
There is nothing noble about being superior to some other man. The true nobility is in being superior to your previous self.	Hindu proverb	Hinduism	Humility
The rattan basket criticizes the palm leaf basket, still both are full of holes.	Philippine Proverb		Humility

Writing a policy document

It would be advisable for schools to draw up a policy document on collective worship which, like all effective policy documents:

- serves the purpose of clarifying, informing and guiding; and
- is marked by brevity, simplicity and clarity.

A policy document on collective worship might contain a number of elements.

1. A brief statement about the nature and character of the school
2. This is important in that the pattern and style of collective practice should reflect and 'speak to' the traditions and character of a particular school. Section 7 of the 1988 Act also requires that collective worship should be appropriate for the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils in the school.

3. An explanation of the role that collective worship plays within the life of the school. This can be done in a number of ways. For instance

a. by listing a central aim and then a series of objectives e.g.

**“Collective worship occupies an important and unique place in the life of Nowhere Primary School. It provides an opportunity for members of the school community to pause from activity, to gather, to remind themselves of and to reflect upon the beliefs and values which bind the school community together. It also allows those with a religious commitment the possibility of entering into worship and those with no religious commitment to sense what worship is and to reflect deeply. In this way we aim both to affirm and to protect the integrity of all members of the school community.
(2)**

In particular, collective worship:

- **provides an opportunity for all members of the school community to stop activity, to pause and to reflect on important issues;**
- **builds up the sense of group identity;**
- **gives pupils the experience of being still or silent;**
- **provides an opportunity for celebrating times of success or joy;**
- **provides an opportunity for meeting at times of sadness or sorrow;**
- **provides an opportunity for highlighting and reflecting upon core school values – such as striving to be honest and truthful, trying hard in all things, respecting oneself as well as other people, striving to be fair and just; and**
- **offers the opportunity to mark significant points in the year, such as festivals and school events.**

by giving examples of how collective worship contributes to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural development of pupils (3) e.g.

Collective worship contributes to the spiritual development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- **reflect upon the value, purpose and meaning of things;**
- **experience times of quiet inactivity to counterbalance the activity which generally marks the rest of the school day; and**
- **hear stories and words from religious and other literature which suggest that there is more to life than meets the eye**

Collective worship contributes to the moral development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- **reflect on matters concerning right and wrong;**
- **hear about incidents in which, and people in whom, goodness or right are exemplified; and**
- **learn about religious and other teachings concerning right and wrong.**

Collective worship contributes to the social development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- **gather with others for a common purpose;**
- **share times of joy and times of sadness with others; and**

- learn how to behave appropriately within a specific social setting.

Collective worship contributes to the cultural development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- hear music from a range of times, places and cultures;
- reflect upon ideas concerning beauty and that which is pleasing to the eye and ear; and
- appreciate the range of talents and gifts found within the school community and beyond.

4. An outline of the pattern and structure for collective worship that has been created

This might best be shown in the form of a grid that outlines the weekly structure e.g.

Day	Grouping	Venue	Time	Leadership	Style/Approach	Notes
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						

5. Comment might also be made concerning other organisational aspects, such as the use made of themes and the role of the assembly coordinator.
6. A brief explanation of how key aspects of the legislative requirements are being met

The wording of key sections of the legislation demands interpretation and a school which is willing to indicate confidently its line of interpretation will be placing itself in a position of strength. Two clauses of the 1988 Act in particular call for interpretation:

A: the requirement that, over a term, the majority of acts of collective worship are of a broadly Christian character. In strict legal terms this means that more than half of Acts of worship should be ‘broadly Christian’. This means that the remainder may focus on other traditions entirely should that be appropriate for the context of the school. “

It has often been noted that the requirement is not that acts of collective worship should be narrowly or exclusively Christian, and that the requirement relates to Christian character rather than Christian content. Thus, a school could say that the broad Christian character is achieved in the majority of its acts of collective worship through, for example:

- through a focus on themes that are both broadly Christian but can also be linked to other religions and beliefs. For example: encouraging a positive and responsible attitude to the environment;
- encouraging a quest for honesty, integrity, justice and truth;
- encouraging children to look beyond the obvious, the immediate and the material;
- encouraging love and respect for self and for the other person;
- encouraging service to others and to the community; and
- building Christian festivals into the yearly programme (which does not, of course preclude focusing on festivals from other traditions as well).

B: the requirement that acts of collective worship are appropriate for the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of pupils at the school

The reference to ages and aptitudes is a reminder that acts of collective worship should be both educational and meaningful. The fundamental way in which a school might take note of the children's family backgrounds (religious and non-religious) is by seeking to make collective worship as inclusive as possible. This might mean that a school:

- recognises that there are many forms of commitment, religious and non-religious;
- recognises that there are many forms of religious commitment;
- has carefully chosen songs to use in collective worship (on the basis that some are more appropriate to the collective setting of a school);
- regards variety – in culture, religion and belief – as something to be acknowledged and explored rather than avoided and denied; and
- builds festivals from a variety of cultural and religious traditions into its yearly programme.

7. A brief exploration of the relationship between collective worship and the school curriculum

This statement might explore the idea that collective worship is in 'dialogue' with the curriculum i.e.

collective worship draws from the curriculum – by providing an opportunity to reflect on and highlight classroom work, for example; and
 collective worship feeds back into the curriculum – by providing ideas and suggestions which can be followed up in the classroom, for example.

A special relationship with religious education might be noted (in that beliefs and values will often be the focus of collective worship, as will celebration and festival) but it would also be proper to point out to teachers that this should not replace religious education within the classroom, a part of the school curriculum.

8. A policy statement concerning requests for withdrawal from collective worship

This statement might simply reiterate the right of parents wholly or partly to withdraw their children from collective worship (see page 3) and the right of teachers to withdraw. The statement might continue by stating: what a member of staff should do if a parent requests withdrawal either verbally or in writing; and what a member of staff considering withdrawal should do.

9. Any other policy statements which the school feels would be helpful

These might include policy statements on such issues as:

prayer e.g.

The use of prayers from Christianity and other religious traditions has a place within school collective worship. However, leaders should be sensitive to the mixed nature of the school community and should be particularly careful with how prayers are introduced. School policy is that an 'invitation' to listen to the words of the prayer should be offered so that a variety of responses are possible – for example, "And now, in a moment of quietness, I want you to listen to some words which are very special for ... (eg Christians). Think about these words or other words which are special for you".

visitors e.g.

- The school has a long tradition of inviting visitors to contribute to or lead collective worship. However, it is important that visitors are chosen who:
 - understand the nature and purpose of collective worship and who will not, therefore, use the opportunity to preach or evangelise; and
 - can communicate well with children.

- In arranging for a visitor to collective worship, it is important that teachers:
 - liaise with the school assembly leader;
 - consider the format of the occasion (eg a talk by the visitor, interviewing the visitor);
 - provide the visitor with all necessary information (the school statement about the purpose of collective worship, the relevant theme, the size and age-range of the group, timings, equipment which is available, car parking facilities); and
 - write to thank the visitor (or get children to do so) after the visit.
 - A small brochure has been prepared which can be sent to visitors after initial contact has been made.

Using visitors to lead or support Acts of collective worship

SACRE recommends that schools use the NATRE publication: "Voices of Faith and Belief" to help prepare visitors to support Acts of Worship.

As part of safeguarding duties and those that fall under the counter terrorism and securities act, schools must vet all visitors to the school including those who will contribute to Acts of worship.

In order to safeguard pupils from visitors who may have extreme or radical views school should:

- ensure all visitors are carefully vetted and take immediate action if any individual or group is perceived to be attempting to influence members of the School community as part of an act of worship
- consider open source checking any organisations which you might consider inviting into school for an act of worship, particularly those in the voluntary sector.

Keeping a record

- It is advisable for schools to keep a brief record of what takes place in its collective worship programme for a number of reasons. For example, records can:
 - in the short term, be a ready source of reference to ensure continuity and variety;
 - in the long term, provide a focus for review and development.
- In addition, they can:
 - be a source of reference should a parent or other person raise a question about practice; and
 - provide material to show to and discuss with OFSTED inspectors.
- experience shows that effective records are simple and accessible. As such, many schools:
 - o use a published grid for each week of the term, for example below:

Date	Leader	Content/Focus/Message	Song/Hymn Used	Comments

- keep the grids in a shared area on the school computer network where staff can both complete details of acts of collective worship for which they have been responsible and glance at the structure and content of those led by others.

Planning

In planning Acts of worship in different groupings, schools are advised to consider to what extent:

- **an appropriate atmosphere (conducive to worship, albeit in an educational sense) is being created**
- **means of doing this might include: using appropriate seating arrangements, subtly marking the transition into and out of the activity (eg by changing the tone and volume of the voice), using a visual focal point, playing music;**
- **pupils are being given the opportunity to reflect and to think at depth**
- **means of doing this might include: encouraging response and the asking of questions, using stories which have depth, using silence and quietness, reading out words which invite reflection (poems, prayers etc), encouraging response but not necessarily discussion; and**
- **pupils and teacher adopt an appropriate bearing towards the activity**
- **this might include: quietening down, being prepared to listen to other people's responses, acknowledging 'deep' questions without necessarily attempting to answer them, accepting both religious and non-religious responses.**
- **a key question to ask would be, "Have children been provided with the opportunity to worship in their own way should they wish?"**

Acts of worship and fundamental British Values

Acts of worship that promote the Fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs can help schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the requirements of section 78 of the Education Act 2002, in their provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Acts of worship and OFSTED inspections

Acts of Collective worship are not mentioned in the latest Ofsted Inspection Framework however, inspectors may choose to observe Collective Worship or an assembly during an inspection visit.

A school might therefore wish to address and consider the following questions prior to an OFSTED inspection.

- 1. In what ways is the school seeking to meet legal requirements relating to frequency and character?**
- 2. What documentation do we aim to make available to the inspectors should they ask to see it?**
- 3. Who will be the best person within the school to meet with the inspector dealing with the section relating to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development? How should this person prepare for the meeting?**
- 4. Are we sufficiently clear about the distinction between 'assembly' and 'collective worship'?**
- 5. What acts of collective worship will take place during the week of the inspection?**
- 6. What is our thinking about how collective worship contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development in particular? What is the evidence for this in practice?**
- 7. To what extent are pupils involved in the assembly life of the school? Should their involvement be greater? Should the involvement of others (staff, visitors etc) be greater?**
- 8. How many pupils (if any) are withdrawn from collective worship by parents? Have we formalised what they should be doing during collective worship time?**
- 9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current practice? How are we seeking to address weaknesses and to build on strengths?**

Resources

Thanks to RE adviser Lat Blaylock of RE Today for permission to use this resource list www.retoday.org.uk

Websites

A number of websites for resources are listed. General sites like Twinkl, TES and Pinterest are worth checking, though sometimes show amateur levels of understanding of religion. We are not able to vouch for everything on these sites: we ask schools to take responsibility for what you use in your own school. But you might like to look at:

- The BBC offer extensive high quality resources and ideas at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship>
- The Christian publisher SPCK offers here a wide range of resources, updated frequently and free to use: www.assemblies.org.uk/
- This free-to-download book has many clear and practical ideas for values assemblies <https://www.lifesavers.co.uk/docs/ValuesForLifeSavers-Justice.pdf>
- This is a sharing site for primary assemblies with lots of free ideas. Quality varies <http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/assembly/assembly>
- The Moral Education Conference has School Assemblies Project. <https://www.communityclapping.net/>
- This is a subscription site, popular with teachers and with a wide range of resources: <http://myschoolassembly.co.uk/>
- This is a site where free resources are shared for assembly: <http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/subjects/assemblies>
- <https://simplycollectiveworship.co.uk/> is a subscription site with a four year programme of primary school values-led assemblies.
- Many development charities provide interesting and exciting materials for global awareness and exploring values of justice. Excellent examples include www.christian-aid.org.uk/ <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Primary-school-assemblies> and <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/resources/education/>
- Video clips and free ideas for values assemblies are shared at <https://assemblytube.com/primary-school-assembly-ideas/>
- This site has free initial resources and then moves to paid subscription: <https://bigstartassemblies.org/>
- This is an insightful Catholic site about prayer from the De La Salle Community. www.prayingeachday.org/
- This Christian charity provides thoughtful and original ideas: www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/assembly
- This site has both primary and secondary ideas for free use. <http://www.assemblies.org.uk/sec/>
- This is the Church of England's entry point for thinking about assembly and school worship: <https://www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies/collective-worship.aspx>
- Humanists UK offer support for inclusive, nonreligious assemblies: <https://humanism.org.uk/education/assemblies-for-all/>

- Former Chair of Thurrock SACRE – Rev. John Guest has published a number of books on assemblies including:
 - Collective Worship Unwrapped: 33 Tried and Tested Story-based Assemblies for Primary Schools
 - More Collective Worship Unwrapped: 20 Tried and Tested Story-based Assemblies for Primary Schools

Charities: There are many charities which offer some assemblies to schools. Search the web for examples, including:

These include The Children’s Society, MIND, the Literacy Shed, World Book Day, Christian Aid, the Mission Aviation Fellowship, The Diana Trust (anti bullying), the Ann Frank Ambassadors and many more.

Resources for Music and worship in schools

There are thousands of ways to use music in school worship. Here are some starting points, each commended by at least one primary teacher. These are very largely Christian, and recommendations from other faiths are welcome, and will be added to this guidance. Inclusion of a site in this list is not an endorsement of content, and teachers should make their own judgements about the music they use in assembly.

Fischy Music has hundreds of songs, very singable, well suited to the context of plural schools. A subscription service or buy with backing tracks and symbols movies using sign language on disc.	www.fischy.com
BBC’s offering is well thought out, varied and easy to use.	https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/primary-school-assemblies-collective-worship-ks1-ks2/zmsnm39
Hillsong Kids. Christian musical resources available for sale, well suited to primary age groups with lots of songs to choose from.	https://hillsong.com/kids/
Aussie singer Colin Buchanan sings about Christianity with children.	https://colinbuchanan.com.au/bl ogs/video
Bethel Kids do Christian music videos, on their site and some on YouTube	https://bethelmusickids.com/
BIGSTARTASSEMBLIES – Christianity materials on subscription, some free.	www.bigstartassemblies.org
Assembly Tube. KS1 & KS2 Primary School Assembly Ideas & topics for collective worship	https://assemblytube.com/primary-school-assembly-ideas/
Dawud Wharnsby Ali sings about Islam and for Muslim children. There are some excellent ways to use his material in school assembly.	https://wharnsby.com/
Faiths In Tune is the website of SOAS inter faith music, and good for links. Not especially for children, but of wide interest.	https://www.faithsintune.org/
Scripture music from Jump Start 3 is free to use on YouTube, aims to familiarise children with Christian Bible teaching in fun ways.	https://jumpstart3.com/

I Sing Pop – worship is a site for learning worship songs in high energy pop styles, easy to use.	https://www.isingpop.org/
Out of the Ark are good for Christian school assembly songs and musical involvement	https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/
Doug Horley, Christian kids musician, songs with actions are on YouTube.	https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGOIQuX191CahA0rWC-Cy2VUzKV_rrFG_w
Kids on the Move free downloads from their website	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqclv3r3KZGV25qn5KqjgLg
Christian School Resources Lift the Lid Christianity Education Resources	https://www.liftthelid.org.uk/
Story Keepers: animations of stories about the first Christians. Many episodes.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-vNpyavrvc&list=PLDe36Q-xwIKJgyzEinRi8n5zk-7VM4XQ2

Notes and References

1. NB DFE Circular 1/94 (January 1994), Religious Education & Collective Worship, para 58: ‘Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear. Collective worship can, nevertheless, be related to the day-to-day life, aspirations and concerns of the school’. This guidance has been superseded by [Religious Education in English schools](#) (2010) in relation to Religious Education, but the 1994 guidance is the most recent published.
2. NB DFE Circular 1/94 (January 1994), Religious Education & Collective Worship, para 57: ‘... worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to ‘collective worship’ rather than ‘corporate worship’.

7 June 2023		ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Update on National Developments and Opportunities		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is: Public		

Executive Summary

This report details the key national developments that impact on Religious Education with suggestions for actions by SACRE

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

- **Review the information collected -see Appendix 1**
- **Evaluate the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- **Authorise the adviser to share the attached update with schools and their governing boards**

2. Introduction and Background

In the period since the last SACRE meeting, a number of developments have taken place. These are presented to SACRE for consideration in support of the duties of SACRE and in accordance with the work plan.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Schools need to be informed about national developments and opportunities available to them but it is important not to overload them with information
- 3.2 Likewise, SACRE needs to be aware of the national context for information they receive that applies just to Thurrock
- 3.3 SACRE needs therefore to decide on which information to share with schools and which reports and national data is most relevant to the situation in Thurrock

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 According to the non-statutory guidance – RE in English Schools (2010), SACRE should provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE. This advice and support includes keeping stakeholders include SACRE members and schools informed about current developments that impact on the subject.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;

- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
- Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
- Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the third element of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, if approved will be conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor on behalf of Thurrock Council

This report is for review and consideration. No decision is required.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement & Project Monitoring Officer

The aim of this report is to provide information about issues that support the provision for RE in Thurrock, to address concerns and to celebrate success. Higher standards in the teaching of RE will help schools to fulfil their statutory duty to promote community cohesion and to encourage better respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – SACRE News Summer Term 2023

Report Author:

Deborah Weston OBE

Associate Adviser for RE

SACRE News – Summer Term 2023

The role of SACRE is to create and monitor the agreed syllabus for RE in our local area, and to advise the local authority on matters relating to the provision and quality of RE and school collective worship. SACRE is eager to respond to teacher-needs and school requests for RE help.

National RE news for Teachers!

This paper is a short digest of some useful items of interest about RE in the summer term 2023. Wherever possible we have provided hotlinks to additional web based resources.

16 What is your religion?
This question is voluntary

- No religion
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion, write in

Using the 2021 Census Data in RE

The 2021 Census data has now been released and we can use it to look at the results with pupils, and compare with the local area. Here are some tips on how to make the most of it!

1. Explain to pupils or students that the religion was question was voluntary. People over 18 had to choose which box to tick.
2. Show pupils the **results for the UK as a whole**: what do they notice? Note the **large fall in the number of people who identify as Christian, and the large rise in the number of people who tick 'no religion'**. Ask pupils why that might be.
3. Look at the **results for our area – local authority and region**. Can students notice some similarities and differences to the national picture?
4. Either show to the class, or allow students to investigate for themselves, the Census data on the internet. Use this link: below. **You can find clickable maps that allow you to zoom in on your really local area and search by religion**. Can students see how their area compares to the wider area? How is it similar, how is it different?
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>
5. Note the age variations between religious and non-religious communities in Thurrock, particularly where it can be shown that the population in school will change in the next decade. E.g. Larger numbers in the 4-10 age group who will join secondary schools. (Hindu and Muslim)

Religion (10 categories)

Buddhist	2.6%	8.3%	9.3%	5.9%	25.3%	38.1%	10.6%
Christian	4.0%	8.6%	9.2%	5.8%	18.2%	28.2%	26.1%
Hindu	7.0%	12.0%	6.9%	5.2%	32.3%	26.9%	9.7%
Jewish	2.2%	2.7%	6.3%	5.4%	14.3%	36.8%	32.3%
Muslim	10.0%	16.4%	12.7%	7.3%	28.2%	21.6%	3.8%
No religion	6.9%	11.4%	12.5%	10.4%	24.4%	24.8%	9.5%
Not answered	7.0%	11.1%	10.1%	8.3%	21.7%	24.1%	17.6%
Other religion	2.2%	5.5%	6.9%	8.2%	25.7%	35.9%	15.5%
Sikh	4.9%	11.2%	12.1%	5.2%	25.4%	27.8%	13.5%

Q1 Can teacher representatives from SACRE provide any examples of how they have used the census in their RE lessons?

Q2 What are the implications of point 5 above for SACRE?

NATRE Spirited Arts 2023 – new themes announced

Will your school join hundreds of schools from around the world taking part in this year's Spirited Arts competition? Entries are welcomed in (almost!) any art form pupils can think of. Winning entries will provide a good response to one of the 5 themes, and judges will be asking is it original? Is it well-crafted? And (most importantly!) is it excellent RE? Closing date is 31st March.

The 6 themes

1. "We have more in common than that which divides us."
2. Green faith, green future? ['God's good earth?']
3. Where is God today?
4. Faith in action, values in action.
5. Sacred space and holy buildings
6. All God's creatures?



More details here www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2023/

Q3 How can SACRE encourage schools in Thurrock to make entries to the National Competition?

Ofsted appoint new Acting Subject Lead for RE

Hazel Henson HMI was appointed as acting subject lead for RE at OFSTED in March 2023. She has a background in primary education.



Children's Commissioner shares her view on RE with former pupil

Shammi Rahman, recently interviewed The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza for RE Today magazine. Dame Rachel is a previous RE teacher and headteacher and Shammi, is a former secondary teacher and now a Race Equality Adviser. Dame Rachel was her RE teacher!

Dame Rachel says, 'a former RE teacher myself, I believe RE teachers have a crucial opportunity to teach children about the wider world and principals of fairness and equality. It was great to talk about how different faiths can teach us different things, for example treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves; having compassion for others; and celebrating the beauty of life in our environment.'



Listen to their conversation here: [Conversation with Shammi Rahman: The importance of Religious Education | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)

RE Hubs – Website now live!



RE Hubs website is now live at www.re-hubs.uk. RE Hubs aim to connect those who can provide resources with those who need them and create a neutral platform being RE professionals together.

Many organizations serve RE/RVE/R&W education in the UK, from places of worship and school speakers to CPD partnerships and resource providers. However, until now, there hasn't been a single place to equip, enable, and signpost everyone within the community.

NATRE Secondary Survey

The NATRE survey of secondary RE teachers is now underway and open until Monday 31st July. Everyone who completes the survey will receive a £5 coupon for the RE Teaching Resources online shop as well as being entered into a prize draw to win a NATRE School Enhanced membership worth £270. The survey is here: [NATRE Survey - Secondary 2023 \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](https://surveymonkey.co.uk)



[Q4 Might SACRE encourage teachers in Thurrock to take part in this survey and then request Thurrock specific data for further analysis?](#)

Culham St Gabriel's launch FREE new self-study course

Digging Deeper: Subject Knowledge, this short, self-study course builds on the introduction level course and is available for FREE. Find out more here: [Culham St Gabriel's Trust Moodle \(cstg.org.uk\)](https://cstg.org.uk)

Understanding Humanism launches new animation and free resources

Understanding Humanism has launched a **NEW animation** 'One Life, live it well' voiced by author and presenter, Alice Roberts. Accompanied by classroom activities, this simple but beautiful animation illustrates how humanists try to approach life: [One Life, Live It Well: watch our new animation narrated by Alice Roberts » Understanding Humanism](#)

They also have available new FREE resources for children in early years, and the stories of four amazing humanist women who changed the world.

Training and CPD opportunities and other support

Free webinars for primary and secondary ECTs – a taster for NATRE ECT membership

Early Career Teachers have access to a range of free support through a series of online sessions. 'Café' sessions give you a chance to talk with experienced teachers and experts from different worldview backgrounds. The taught sessions offer expert input with a focus on practical classroom strategies.

Date – All Mondays 4.00-5.30pm	Topic
12 June	Taught session: Focus on Sikhi
10 July	Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Christianity

ECT webinars booking link www.natre.org.uk/membership/early-careers-teacher/ect-free-monthly-webinar/

NATRE: new membership packages!

NATRE is the largest membership organisation that promotes, defends and supports RE teachers and RE teaching. It does this through producing high-quality resources and CPD, lobbying government, being involved in conversations with the DfE and Ofsted, Local Authorities and SACREs, telling teachers' stories and experiences and being a voice for all teachers.



Membership packages for students, ECTs, teachers, schools, RE professionals and RE enthusiasts!

Details: www.natre.org.uk/membership

NATRE: welcome webinars for new members

New NATRE members are invited to a monthly welcome webinar. This will help them use their NATRE membership and enjoy it to its fullest!

What will they learn?

- How to Access NATRE resources
- Access online termly mailing resources
- Access Local Groups area
- Take the best out of the NATRE monthly newsletter
- How to redeem your REtoday library membership
- How to use your membership discount

Members can register their interest to attend a webinar at this link.

www.natre.org.uk/member-login/natre-members-welcome-webinar/

BBC expands early years RE resources

There are new resources for 4 and 5 year olds for RE / RME and RVE from BBC Bitesize Reception. These include some simple craft activities and some recipes for festive food

with clear and simple ideas to bring the world of religion alive for small children. The subject is connected to work in the fields of expressive arts and design, helping pupils with their understanding of the world particularly in the field of religion and belief. These new materials cover Christmas, Easter, Eid Al Adha, Vaisakhi, Divali and more and have now gone live. They include video clips made for the age group, activity sheets and information for teacher-use. Lat Blaylock, who contributed to the work says: 'I'm really pleased to see that BBC have made such a diverse and well thought out contribution to Early Years learning about religion and belief. Teachers will find this is a little treasure trove.'

Here is a link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z24kqyc> [Religions, festivals and celebrations](#)

Celebrating 25 years of children's emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing

2023 is an exciting year for Fischy Music as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary! Celebrations are already underway with free online concerts streaming live every month throughout this year, so whole classrooms and assembly halls of children can join in with 30 minutes of uplifting songs! Founded in 1998 by Stephen Fischbacher, Fischy Music (www.fischy.com) is a children's charity, writing songs for and with children to nurture positive mental health and help them express and manage a range of emotions.

Songs are at the heart of everything we do, with Health & Wellbeing and RE & Collective Worship songs and teaching resources made available to children, families, schools and churches. In addition to live events, our innovative song-streaming platform, Fischy Music Online has made it easy for teachers everywhere to access over 140 songs and teaching resources, with new songs regularly added.

"Fischy Music songs open an emotional door allowing children to have the confidence to discuss issues and problems that we might otherwise not pick up on." Teacher, St Philomena's Primary School, Glasgow

As well as the many health benefits of singing, the positive impact of the messages in the songs, like 'build up one another' and 'we can make a difference in this world of ours' stay with children as they grow up. Schools can subscribe to Fischy Music Online to access over 140 songs. The RE Package includes resources created in conjunction with Lat Blaylock, RE Today, to help staff use music well in RE and connecting to significant Christian concepts (eg from Understanding Christianity). The resources can be used by all staff and are useful in all primary schools wherever you want to enable spiritual reflection and can also be used in assemblies and services for collective worship. To find out more, email: info@fischy.com

Educate Against Islamophobia (EAI)

Educate Against Islamophobia (EAI) has recently published a plethora of educational materials for the Early Years, primary schools, high schools and educational practitioners across the U.K. The teaching and learning materials are reflective of the respective curriculums and national frameworks, and offer learners with learning opportunities that are applicable to their respective nations.

Early Years resources:

- Amna & Amy Storybook
- 2 lesson plans.

The storybook and accompanying lesson plans aim to support children in the Early Years to develop an awareness of equality, diversity and respectful behaviour and introduce learners to aspects of the Islamic identity.

Primary school resources:

- Unit of work

The unit of work which comprises 6 lesson plans supports KS1-KS2/P2-P7 learners in developing positive attitudes towards diversity. This unit of work also aims to introduce learners to the Islamic identity and will enable them to explore some of the similarities and differences between Islam and other faiths/culture.

High school resources:

- Unit of work

The unit of work which comprises 6 lesson plans supports KS3-KS4/S1-S4 learners in developing an awareness of Islamophobia, including its manifestations and dangers. Learners will explore the issue of Islamophobia through a range of themes and lenses including human rights, anti-bullying and media literacy.

Educator resources:

- Islamophobia awareness training session
- Equality, diversity and inclusion audit

The Islamophobia awareness training and EDI audit aims to promote an awareness of Islamophobia and equip practitioners with the understanding of how to address it in the school community. These materials will also assist educational practitioners to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010).

To download your free copy of EAI's materials, visit: <https://eai.org.uk/>

If you would like to learn more about Educate Against Islamophobia's work and services contact info@eai.org.uk

Using Faith Inspired Art to Encourage Conversation, Enable Reflections and Inspire Action. *Cheryl Homer, Westhill Endowment*

RE Today and NATRE have always been great supporters of the arts and if you are wondering if using faith inspired arts in your school might be beneficial the answer is most likely 'yes'. But where do you start. Westhill Endowment are here to help, with years of experience working with faith inspired arts. The charity has 10 art collections which are available FREE* to schools and community venues around the UK.

Many communities have already benefited from these resources which aim to encourage conversation, enable reflections, and inspire action. A Year 10 textiles student recently reflected on her experience with the Gethsemane Garments: "I liked the green garment [representing Hope] showing the rips and tears of the fabric, but with the sides being restitched to show signs of healing and positivity."

A Primary School Teacher reflected on a creative lockdown session provided by their local vicar using the exhibition Bald Statements: "The creative artwork [the children produced in response] has been thought provoking and the children were able to speak honestly on their feelings and experiences of lockdown."

The art collections come with a variety of themes and mediums, including free standing and wall mounted works of art. Additional materials such as booklets, education packs, and films are available. Westhill will also consider funding applications for events around your exhibition.

Westhill Endowment work one to one with all exhibition hosts helping you tailor your exhibition to suit your space and your audiences. If you'd like to know more, please contact Westhill's Arts Coordinator, Cheryl Homer, on cheryl@westhillendowment.org or check the website or social media. www.westhillendowment.org www.facebook.com/WesthillEndowment

www.youtube.com/channel/UCHKjKpunQ0C4XSXD4j88XZA

**You may incur transport and insurance costs, please ask if this is applicable.*

Anti-racist RE: continuing debates and widening resources.

Jonathan Marshall, MBE, ran a brilliant RE and interfaith centre in Plymouth before he retired. Thanks to Jonathan for drawing attention to resources which might compliment the NATRE anti-racist RE materials (<https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/anti-racist-re/>)

"I think teachers might find the work of the Equiano Project on anti-racist education helpful. In the true spirit of quality RE, some diversity of views might be welcome."

This black-led project may help teachers of RE who want to understand the complexity of an anti-racist RE approach: they should be encouraged to explore a range of different voices, one of which is to be found on the excellent website of "The Equiano project" <https://www.theequianoproject.com/>

See for example the video "Understanding the new politics of race" by Prof. John McWhorter. At just under twenty minutes, this perspective is an extremely helpful and profound insight into the background and current situation of anti-racism.

Jonathan also draws attention to the 'Don't Divide Us' project, whose opening statement includes these key ideas: "We should treat everyone as an individual worthy of respect regardless of race, religion or the colour of their skin We call this colourblind anti-racism – it is based on freedom and tolerance – and we believe it is the best way to counter prejudice where it does exist. Britain is a successful multi-cultural society with a positive story to tell about race relations: We won't benefit from importing divisive political ideas from the US that don't reflect our history and which undermine our shared values today. See much more at: <https://dontdivideus.com/our-beliefs/>

Philosophy of Religion resources from the FT!

Jack Robertson, RE teacher in north London, is working with the Financial Times to offer free access to FT.com for all schools and colleges teaching sixteen to nineteen year old students. An FT subscription can support students in developing the broad knowledge that will help them stand out to examiners, universities and employers. A Philosophy Class page, ft.com/philosophyclass, is available for teachers and students of philosophy and ethics. It brings together relevant articles from across the FT and provides accompanying questions that prompt students to reflect critically and make connections to areas of the A-level specification. There is also an IB Theory of Knowledge page for IB students. Recent Philosophy Class articles cover topics from the ethics of climate protests and abortion to developments in AI and quantum physics, as well as interviews with philosophers such as MacAskill, Chalmers and Srinivasan. Participating schools receive the same level of access to FT.com as regular subscriber. Check if your school is registered or register your interest via the Philosophy Class page or at ft.com/schoolsarefree

Jack Robertson <JRobertson@gebarnet.co.uk>

Christian Aid Global Neighbours Assessors Needed!

The Global Neighbours accreditation scheme is an award scheme for schools run by the charity Christian Aid, in partnership with the Church of England Education Office. It is open to all primary schools and has recently expanded into secondary schools too. The scheme has been running for five years and celebrates the development of global citizenship and courageous advocacy in schools. Its aim is to encourage a deeper understanding of the world and for young people to be empowered to engage with and respond to global issues.

Schools can apply for a bronze, silver or gold award. To achieve accreditation, schools must demonstrate how they are fulfilling criteria relating to:

- Leadership, vision and values
- Teaching and learning
- Collective worship and spiritual development
- Pupil participation in active global citizenship
- Community engagement

Christian Aid is looking to recruit to its pool of assessors for this scheme. An assessor looks at all the evidence provided, makes a judgement and writes a report for the school. At bronze level this is a document based assessment supplemented by a phone conversation. At silver and gold levels a school visit is required.

The role of assessor especially suits education professionals with experience of school leadership and advising or inspecting schools.

Global Neighbours assessors need:

- An informed interest in best global citizenship/global learning practice in schools and an understanding of best practice in pupil participation
- Excellent interpersonal and written communication skills
- Experience of evaluating the quality of educational practice and leadership in schools
- Proven ability to adhere to deadlines

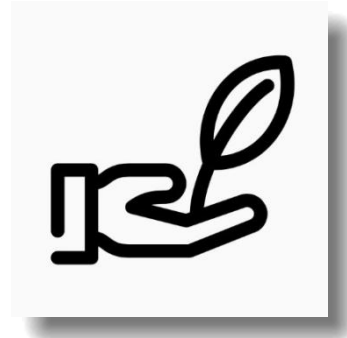
Christian Aid provide training, ongoing support and reimbursement for time given. The hours for this role are occasional and flexible.

For more information please contact Alison Brown (Global Neighbours Schools Programme Officer): abrown@christian-aid.org

The RE Connect Environmental programme for RE

Are you looking for ways to connect your RE teaching with the environmental crisis?

The RE:Connect Teacher Fellowship Programme is designed to help deepen teachers' understanding and confidence for exploring the environmental crisis through the lens of religions and worldviews in RE. The programme is not just about getting ideas, but also enhancing your teaching practice and professional network around this theme.



After a successful pilot of the programme in 2021-22, RE:Connect will be running again from September 2023, thanks to a grant from the Culham St Gabriel's Trust. There are places for **up to 10 teachers** of RE (primary and secondary) on the 6 month teacher fellowship programme. The initiative is run by Dr Jeremy Kidwell, Associate Professor in Theological Ethics at the University of Birmingham and Dr Ian Jones of St Peter's Saltley Trust, with input from experienced primary and secondary specialists, environmental scientists, climate activists and academic researchers in religion and environment.

The programme offers opportunities to:

- Deepen subject knowledge on the intersection of religion and ecology
- Work with cutting-edge subject specialists on religious ethics/practice, ecology, and climate change policy

- Work as part of a supportive and dynamic team to create and trial new approaches and resources for teaching on this theme
- Become a champion for teaching and learning on religion and environmental crisis

The Teacher Fellowship Programme involves monthly workshops from Autumn 2023 to Spring 2024, with tasks to undertake between workshops. Programme sessions will include one fully-funded weekend residential and 6-8 online evening sessions (roughly one per month). There is no cost of participation to the teacher or their school and Fellows receive a bursary of £500 to cover costs of participation plus travel expenses to enable attendance at in-person sessions.

Interested? Please contact Ian Jones (director@saltleytrust.org.uk) to register your interest. Selection for the programme is by a formal application process.

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7 June 2023		ITEM: 10
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Recruitment, Training and Retention of Teachers of RE		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is: Public		

Executive Summary

Factors leading to difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified teachers of RE:

1. Unintended consequences of Government curriculum policies and use of performance measures
2. Removal of short course GCSE RS from performance tables
3. Decline in recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies Degrees
4. Lack of parity for subjects in relation to a training bursary
5. Demand far exceeding supply, especially in regions where HEI courses have closed

Impact on pupils

1. Poorer quality provision when teachers who teach RE as an additional subject have not been trained in line with the Teacher Standards.
2. Loss of pupils' statutory entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes RE on a par with subjects of the National Curriculum
3. These factors disproportionately affect disadvantaged pupils who the evidence shows often have the most to gain from RE
4. Pupils in less diverse areas appear to be less likely to have the opportunity to study GCSE RS

What action should the Department for Education take to address challenges

1. Address regional variations including the availability of suitable courses, the demand for teachers and where HEI courses have not been replaced by school led ITT

2. Consider the target audience for recruitment campaigns which are often different for different subjects, including career changers, mature entrants etc
3. Work more closely with subject associations in recruitment campaigns and in the case of RE, faith and belief organisations, perhaps through the RE Council
4. Address inequalities in relation to the support of ECTs – so support Hubs for all, not just English, Maths, MFL, Computing etc.

What has been the impact of Bursaries and Scholarships?

1. The withdrawal of bursaries for RE deters people who want to train in RE who cannot afford the costs, especially mature entrants given there are so few salaried routes available for RE
2. Bursaries for others subjects draw graduates outside these specialisms, who might previously have applied for RE, towards bursary subjects.

Current system

1. Closer monitoring of ECT programmes needs to ensure the subject specific elements of the teacher standard are delivered to a high standard.
2. The diversity of training routes should be increased with more part time and more salaried/ apprenticeship routes supported.
3. Beyond the two ECT years, teachers need ongoing professional learning that is subject specific.
- 4.

Impact of the Early Career Framework

1. Teachers and leaders have given negative feedback about the ECF's impact on curriculum and subject knowledge.
2. A NATRE Flash survey showed ECT concerns that ECF could limit their flexibility in providing high-quality training for trainee teachers. Only 8% of current secondary ECTs described the subject specific aspects of the programme to be good. 2/3 of respondents described the programme as poor or very poor.
3. The implementation of the ECF needs to be closely monitored to ensure it is achieving its intended aims.
4. ECF may harm RE trainee teachers due to curriculum misalignment, limited professional development, and inadequate support from DfE for the teaching workforce.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

Consult with school leaders to collect information about:

- **whether challenges in recruitment of RE specialists affects Thurrock Schools**

- what strategies they have used to fill vacant posts, timetable slots e.g. changes to the curriculum, retraining teachers of other subjects, being involved in SCITTs (School centred initial teacher training) apprentice schemes etc?
- What impact the shortage of teachers has on provision for RE

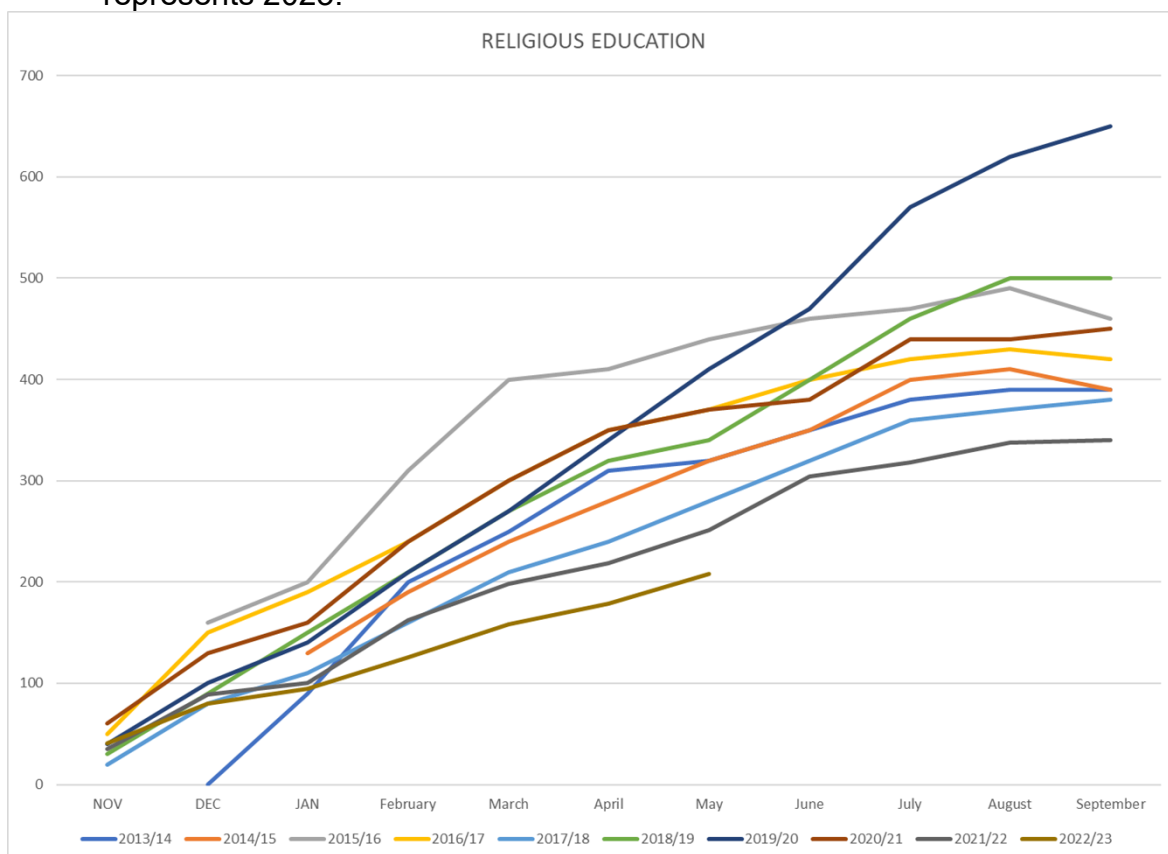
2. Introduction and Background

Section 391(1)(a) of the Education Act 1996 explains that one of the matters a SACRE may discuss is the supply of teachers and provision of teacher training. This item is presented to SACRE under this instruction.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Evidence set out in this report and elsewhere supports the claim that there is a crisis in recruitment for teacher training at the moment and that this is particularly the case for Religious Education.

The diagram below from Prof John Howson of teachvac makes the situation very clear in comparison to other years. The brown line at the bottom represents 2023.



As lack of specialist teachers is a known issue in Thurrock (see survey data from data discussed at the Spring Term meeting), SACRE should investigate the extent to which it is having an impact on local schools and the provision of RE for pupils.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Not applicable

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;

- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
- Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
- Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the third element of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the edits of the guidance was conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor

The matters raised in this report and the recommendations made are within the remit and jurisdiction of the Council to approve. Section 391(1) of the Education Act 1996 expressly makes provision for SACREs to advise the local authority on such matters connected with amongst other things, the religious education to be given at a particular school, as SACRE may see fit. Therefore, these recommendations are within the remit of the local authority to approve.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer

When there are insufficient specialist teachers to deliver RE, this will inevitably have an impact on the quality of Religious Education delivered or even on a school's capacity to deliver RE at all. This will reduce the capacity to celebrate the diversity in a school and local community. This in turn may have an impact on opportunities to develop respect and tolerance for those with beliefs that are different to their own.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Recruitment and Retention of Secondary Teachers of RE 2023

Report Author:

Deborah Weston OBE
Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1: Recruitment and Retention of Secondary Teachers of RE 2023

The current situation regarding teacher recruitment and retention

1. What are the main factors leading to difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified teachers?

Government curriculum policies and use of performance measures

Since 2010, the unintended consequences of government policy is a decline in the status of RE e.g. omission of Religious Studies from the Humanities basket of the English Baccalaureate and consequential downgrading of the value of GCSE in performance measures including progress 8. The then Secretary of State for education, Michael Gove MP admitted to assuming that the subject's statutory place in the curriculum would protect it. It did not.

Removal of short course GCSE from performance tables

The removal of GCSE RS Short Course from the list of qualifications that can contribute to performance measures means the entries have fallen from 254,698 in 2010 to 18,257 in 2022. So, a staggering **236,441 fewer pupils** in England now leave school with an accredited qualification in Religious Studies and many of those will not have studied the subject past key stage 3. More than 500 schools (school workforce data) report offering zero hours of RE in Year 11 and thousands of others offer only a token amount of RE as part of a PSHE or Life programme.

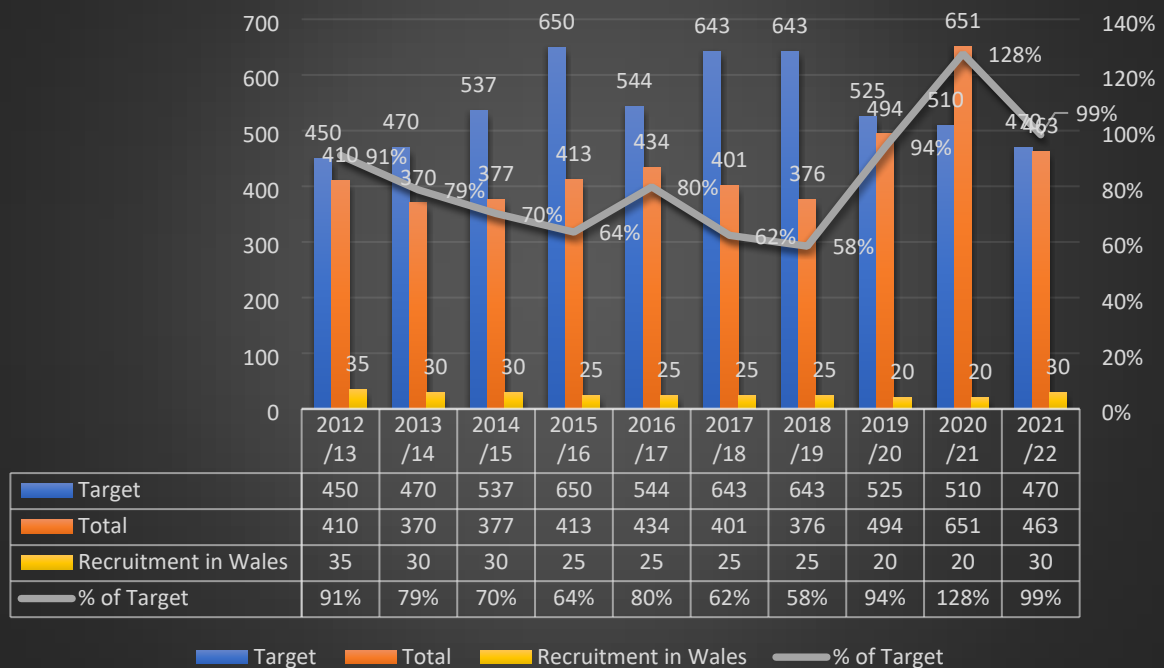
Decline in recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies Degrees

This lack of exposure to Religious Education for so many pupils, has obviously had an impact on recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies degree courses. At last count, there were only 1400 graduates from Theology and Religious Studies of whom around 10% follow a career in an education related subject. So with a pool of around 140 graduates, Religious Education needs to recruit from other graduate subjects including Philosophy, Social Sciences, Law and Education Studies for example. However, by failing to offer bursaries for RE trainees, graduates are deterred from training for RE because of the financial disincentives.

Lack of parity for subjects in relation to a training bursary

The RE community has campaigned for many years for a bursary. Even when one was offered, it was of a lower value to that for other subjects. When our campaigning drew attention to a long history of under recruitment to the target of around 650 trainees, the target was cut. Except for the year at the start of the pandemic, when most subjects recruited above expectations, the DfE has failed to meet its target for a decade.

Recruitment for Secondary Religious Education Specialists



Demand far exceeding supply

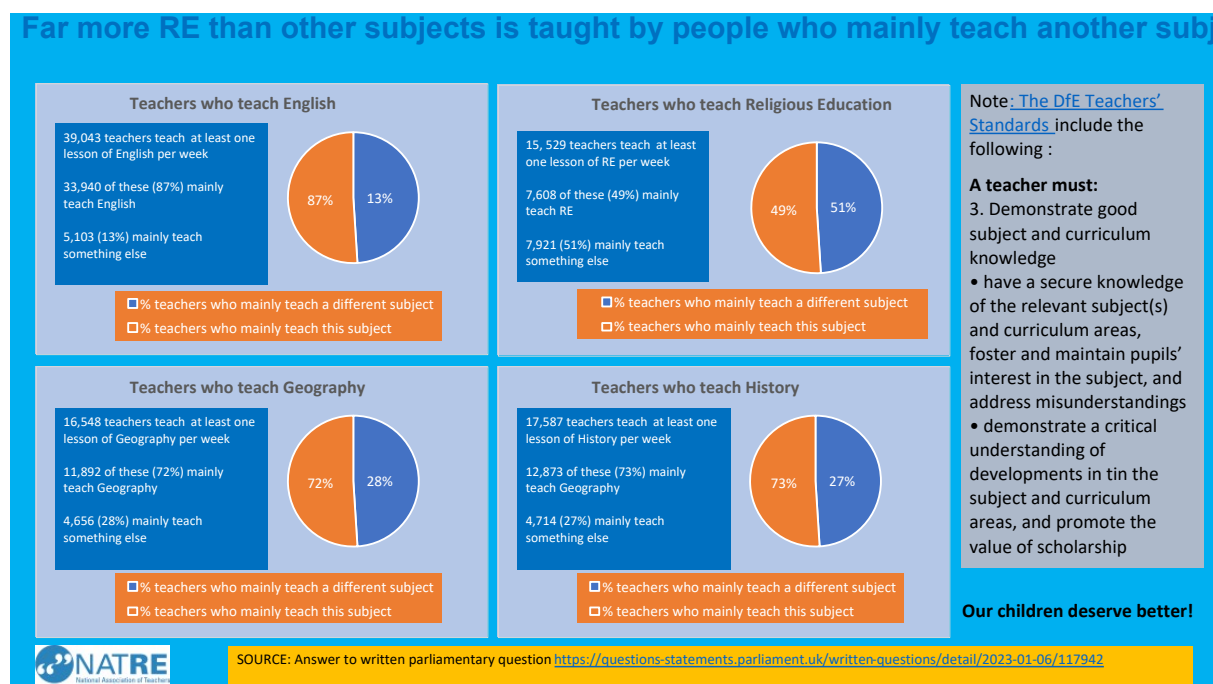
A count of advertised posts in May 2021 after the final resignation date for teachers in service, was over 100. Prof John Howson of TeachVac calculated that at this point in the school year, all but a handful of that year's trainees, who were seeking employment, had secured a post. The implications of this is that those 100 posts would have remained unfilled. In the last week of March 2022, almost 200 RE posts were advertised. See the regional distributions below, remembering that this is just one week of advertisements. Even though there are fewer trainees available in 2022/23, we can use the most recent published data to show how some regions are worse affected than others.

Row Labels	Advertisements in the region in the last week of March 2023	Trainees available 2021/22
East	7	28
East Midlands	17	18
London	39	137
North East	4	14
North West	25	84
South East	59	60
South West	11	41
West Midlands	20	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	14	39
Grand Total	196	475

2. Which subjects are most affected?

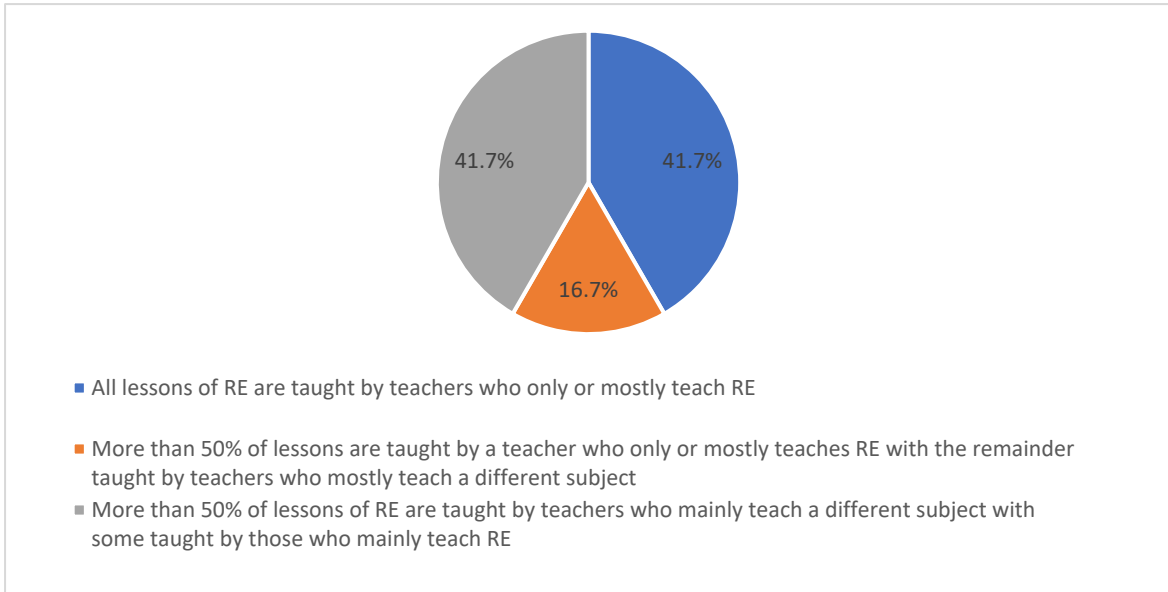
Religious education is listed as one of the subjects most likely to significantly under recruit this year by [NFER](#). In January 2023, according to the UCAS monthly data, applications for all subjects were down by 22% on the previous year and down by 32% for religious education.

Despite the government quoting high numbers of ‘teachers of RE ’in responses to questions by concerned MPs from across the political spectrum, these figures for the number of teachers of RE or even of the number of full time equivalent posts hides a vital fact. The DfE school workforce data counts a teacher of RE if they teach just one lesson of the subject per week. In this case, the total workforce is made up of far more teachers with other specialisms than most other subjects. The [NFER report of 2022](#) includes information about the number of non-specialists teaching at least ‘some lessons’ subjects like Maths (45%) Physics 39% and MFL (17%) but this year, the [minister for schools](#) admitted that according to the school workforce census, 51% of those teaching RE, spend most of their time teaching a completely different subject. This means that unlike the subjects above, where ‘some’ lessons are taught by non-specialists, in the case of religious education, MOST lessons are taught not just by non-specialists, who might have developed expertise in the subject through experience or further training, but by people who mainly teach another subject and might have a few lessons free on their timetable.



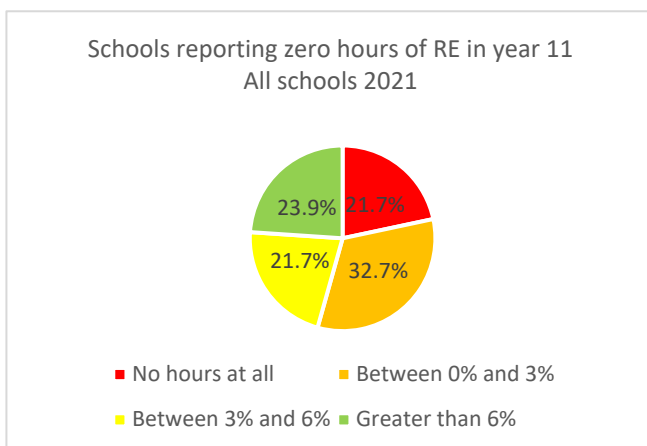
What is the situation in Thurrock?

The survey of Thurrock schools included in a report to the last meeting shows that in 41.7% of schools report that more than 50% of lessons are taught by teachers who mainly teach another subject.



School leaders then face an impossible choice. If they continue with their planned curriculum, they know that at best, the standard of delivery will not be as high as if a specialist or trained teacher were leading the lesson, they know that a teacher who mainly teaches another subject would be much less likely to be able to answer pupils' questions but at worst, they may provide inaccurate or even cause offence to pupils with religious or non-religious worldviews. [A report from members of the Hindu community](#) following a public survey, provides a useful source for evidencing this issue with accounts of the experiences of parents from a specific faith backgrounds.

Consequently, there has been a rapid increase in the number of schools that have removed discrete lessons of RE from their curriculum, instead offering much less ambitious programmes that combine PSHE, Citizenship and aspects of RE in a programme that does a disservice to all these subjects. A recent Ofsted school inspection report says this about the curriculum in one such school: *“Some curriculum plans are not ambitious enough. This means that pupils do not develop rich knowledge in some subjects.*



This is particularly the case in religious education, which is delivered through ‘life’ lessons. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans are ambitious in all subjects, particularly religious education”.

In other schools, the subject has disappeared from the taught curriculum entirely, especially in years 10 and 11 (14-16 year olds).

This chart was constructed from the DfE school workforce census:

- How does the situation differ across the country and across different types of schools and colleges?

There appears to be a correlation between areas where there is a poor supply of specialist teacher training, particularly at higher education institutions and areas with shortages of RE teachers. The availability of school-led training places has not kept pace with the closure of HEI programmes where the number of suitable applicants has meant that group sizes are unviable. In the last round, around 75% of religious education teachers were trained in HEI institutions, however, there were significant variations between regions.

The table below provides an indication of the situation this year. Although we do not yet have the figures for the 2022-23 training year, the previous year's figures provide an indication of the likely pattern. However, fewer RE teachers are being trained in 2022-23 than 2021-22 so the situation is likely to be worse. It is clear that the situation in the South East and the East Midlands is particularly difficult with almost as many posts advertised as there will be new teachers in just one single week.

As of 21st April 2023, Prof John Howson of TeachVac calculated there have been 132 more posts advertised nationally than people, especially early career teachers, available to fill them. The evidence from training institutions is that almost all this year's recruits in RE and several other subjects, who are seeking a post, have secured one. This time last year, when the final closing date for serving teacher resignations had passed, over a hundred posts were advertised in one week but with virtually no one to apply for them.

Supply failing to meet demand

Row Labels	Number of advertised RE posts in the region in the first week of March 2023	Trainees available 2021/22 from that religion
East	7	28
East Midlands	17	18
London	39	137
North East	4	14
North West	25	84
South East	59	60
South West	11	41
West Midlands	20	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	14	39
Grand Total	196	475

4. What impact does this have on pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND?

Ofsted subject reports over recent years has described the impact of the use of non-specialists to teach RE on the quality of provision. However, the DfE does not appear to include this factor in the teacher supply model.

There is [plentiful evidence](#) that Religious education/studies at examination level, is a subject with one of the smallest participation and attainment gaps between

disadvantaged pupils and their peers, in the curriculum. However, the lack of supply of specialist teachers is leading to fewer schools offering the subject at GCSE or A level. The deadlines of this research are as follows:

- a) Disadvantaged pupils less likely to be entered for GCSE Religious Studies than their peers
- b) Disadvantaged pupils twice as likely as their peers to choose RS at A level
- c) Attainment gap for A level RS at A*-E was the third smallest of all subjects
- d) Disadvantage gap for GCSE RS, narrowed with the introduction of 'reformed' specifications
- e) Religious Studies has a below average disadvantage and participation gap
- f) There is a close correlation between [areas with lower proportions](#) of people who identify on the census as belonging to a religion and lower levels of entry for GCSE RS. For example, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 81% of year 11 pupils are entered for a GCSE RS, but in Somerset and Wakefield

This suggests that when Religious Studies GCSE is not offered, disadvantaged pupils are affected to a greater degree.

5. What action should the Department take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment and retention?

- A) The DfE needs to take more account of the regional variations in supply and demand that affect recruitment in different subjects. In areas where Universities no longer train teachers, this has a direct impact on recruitment.
- B) Similarly, the age-profile of new recruits, varies between subjects and more mature students are less likely to be able to train when there is no bursary or salaried route or to travel large distances to find a provider offering such a programme.
- C) The TV and other advertisement rarely features images of classrooms other than science laboratories, which is less likely to attract a person considering subjects like Religious education, Art or Music for example. Careful attention needs to be paid to the target audience for recruitment campaigns in subjects. E.g. those working in Youth Work, particularly faith and belief-based activity, might be attracted by working through their national groups.
- D) New recruits need to know that they will be well supported throughout their training and early careers, especially in areas such as Religious education where subject knowledge is enormous and potentially contentious. Subjects should not be treated unequally, so for example, Mathematics, Languages and Science teachers can access support through subject Hubs. Religious education had to seek charitable trust funding to pilot regional hubs for teachers. [The Regional RE Hubs team is ready to go! \(natre.org.uk\)](#)

6. What has been the impact of the new bursaries and scholarships announced in October?

As the number of graduates in Theology and Religious Studies is insufficient to meet demand for RE trainee teachers, the subject needs to recruit from other subjects such as Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Education Studies and so on. However, when RE training does not attract a bursary or a scholarship, trainees are telling us that they need to train in a bursary subject for financial reasons, even when the subject they want to teach is RE.

TOP TEN DEGREES FOR SECONDARY RE TRAINEES IN 2020-21



Only 32% of the 633 trainees had a degree in Religious Studies, Theology or Theology and Religious Studies.

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